

# The Rages Rag

Newsletter of Rail Action Group, East of Scotland

www.rages.org.uk

Issue No. 53 - April 2012

## Ministerial Visit

On 28 February, Keith Brown, MSP and Minister for Transport at Holyrood, visited East Lothian and Berwickshire as he had promised when the RAGES Committee met him at Holyrood last November.

He was welcomed to East Linton by Paul McLennan, the East Lothian Council Leader and RAGES member. Along with Paul, there was a large contingent gathered to support the need for the local service and a re-opened station at East Linton, comprising: East Lothian MSP, Iain Gray; East Lothian council staff and their photographer; Dunpender Community Council; SEStran; and RAGES committee members. In addition Jim Fullarton, Scottish Borders Councillor, and some of its staff had come up from the Borders to add their support.

After a good discussion, most of the group set off for Reston. Tom Thorburn, RAGES chairman, was able to accompany the Minister in his car and point out the local landmarks as well as having an additional discussion on our aims.



The Minister discusses the plans with Paul McLennan on the footbridge at East Linton

At Reston we were met by a Borders TV crew and press photographers.

Jim Fullarton, RAGES member, and Barrie Forrest, RAGES vice chairman, both welcomed the Minister to Reston.

Also present were: John Lamont, the constituent MSP; Jim Hume, South Scotland list MSP; Joan Campbell, prospective Berwickshire councillor; and the local council staff. Unfortunately, Paul Wheelhouse, MSP, who had organised the visit, was unable to attend due to party business.

The party visited the proposed site of the new Reston station, at the foot of The Orchard, where a good airing of the need for a station was given.

Barrie Forrest then accompanied the Minister in his car to Eyemouth, showing him some of the outlying districts which would also benefit from a re-opened station at Reston.

At Eyemouth, the Minister was welcomed by Barbara Prater, the vice Chair of Eyemouth Town Community Council, who spoke eloquently on her own situation of studying for a degree at Queen Margaret University and having had to purchase a car to allow her to do so, with considerable petrol costs. This situation applies to many young people who wish to further their studies or careers.



The Minister at Reston with Barrie Forrest, Jim Fullarton and John Lamont

During the visit, the Minister was enthusiastic and listened attentively to our aims. However, as at our previous meeting at Holyrood, he cautioned that financing the required subsidy of up to £2.5m was still a problem.

At his request, an additional study to augment last year's local rail study is being undertaken by SEStran. Their draft points are with the two councils for approval, before it is submitted to consultants. Important points which were missed in the initial study will be addressed, such as: input from more

Go to page 3

Welcome to this issue of The Rages Rag, which we publish regularly. It is the main means of communication with our members.

Inside Issue 53:

- Parliamentary debate - Page 2
- Car sharing - Page 2
- Kids go free - Page 2
- Local Rail Meeting - Page 3
- East Coast MD - Page 4

The editor invites contributions which should be sent to him at the "Published by" address at the foot of page 4.

# Parliamentary Debate

The next stage of our campaign was the debate on the local rail service from Edinburgh to Berwick, with re-opened stations at East Linton and Reston, at Holyrood which went well. This took place on 21 March when just under twenty RAGES members were present in the public gallery to hear John Lamont, MSP, lead the debate. He was followed by MSPs Iain Gray, Paul Wheelhouse, Jim Hume, Alex Johnstone, Chic Brodie and Claudia Beamish.

All spoke in favour of the motion by supporting John Lamont, each bringing out extra points for the local service to be implemented and also praising RAGES for their campaigning work.

The text of the debate can be found at:

<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/parliamentarybusiness/28862.aspx?r=6922>

On opening the above link, click on the + box alongside the item labelled “Rail Services (Berwickshire and East Lothian)” to see the text.

The video of the debate can be seen at:

[http://news.bbc.co.uk/democracylive/hi/scotland/newsid\\_9707000/9707039.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/democracylive/hi/scotland/newsid_9707000/9707039.stm)

In the audio, RAGES members can be seen in the public gallery a few times.

Worthy of quoting from the Minister for Transport’s closing remarks are:

“... we are keen to improve access to the rail network by local communities on existing routes through the provision of additional stations. New stations or services will be considered favourably by the Scottish ministers, subject to the STAG appraisal of other transport options and rail being identified as the best option. Where the surrounding population is sufficient to generate a high level of demand, whether through workplace or visitor needs, we will support new stations. However, even then any funding for the construction of the stations and the subsidisation of services would have to be identified and prioritised relative to other national and local investment priorities. Where local funding sources can be identified, that can greatly help in bringing a project up the priority list.”

and:

“We are keen to consider proposals for new stations where there would be clear benefits. As I said when I made my site visit, there is an awful lot of pressure just now—whether through the high-speed rail proposals or the Edinburgh to Glasgow Improvement Programme—to concentrate on journey times alone, but I have said that we will not do that. Connectivity with communities that are not otherwise connected to the rail network should be taken into account, even if that is sometimes at the expense of journey times.”

The debate lasted 40 minutes and RAGES is grateful to all MSPs who contributed to the debate.

At the end of the debate, John Lamont and Paul Wheelhouse kindly gave the RAGES members a tour of the Parliament.

Later, our chairman, in thanking John Lamont, said:

“I was particularly humbled when you praised the efforts of RAGES and mentioned myself, Barrie and Russell - this was very kind. Tonight was a terrific personal boost to me and I have to say was reward indeed for all the hard work that the Group and those associated with it have carried out to date. I must also thank you for showing us round the Parliament.”

## Barrie on TV

Prior to the debate at Parliament Barrie Forrest, vice chairman, was interviewed by Catherine Samson of Border TV.

He was asked what he expected to hear from the Transport Minister at the debate.

Barrie hoped that we would achieve our aims to have the opening of the stations put into the 2014 franchise as we had support all the people in the area. This included local Community Councils and MSPs in our area along with the support of Scottish Secretary, Michael Moore, MP for Berwickshire. Michael Moore has written to Keith Brown adding his support for Reston.

The interview went out on Border News TV program Lookaround at 6pm that night.

## Spare Wheels

Sustaining Dunbar has launched Dunbar’s carshare club called Spare Wheels. It is part of the CommonWheels network of community-owned carsharing clubs which gives members access to an extra 67 cars all over the country.

Joining costs £25 after which you will receive a smart card. This card when activated will unlock your booked car. Currently there are two: one at the station and the other at Asda. The Ford Fiesta costs £3.25 per hour and 21p per mile. There is a daily rate of £27. The 7-seater Mazda is slightly dearer.

Full details can be found at their website:  
[www.sparewheels.org.uk](http://www.sparewheels.org.uk)

## Kids go Free

The ScotRail 'Kids go Free' offer is now available from Dunbar. It is valid on all off-peak trains with an adult who purchases a RETURN ticket: all day at the weekends, and Monday to Friday going out after 09:30 and returning from Edinburgh on or before the 16:33 or on or after 18:30.

### Membership

We now have nearly 180 members from around the counties. Please encourage your neighbours or fellow passengers to join RAGES.

Membership forms can be obtained from committee members, whose names can be found on your membership card.

# Ministerial Visit

From page 1

of the local community councils and VisitScotland from the point of view of tourism – the study only took account of commuters going from Reston. Tourism is important to both East Lothian and Berwickshire with local tourist attractions around the proposed stations and three large caravan sites near to Reston.

Regarding the new ScotRail franchise consultation which has just come to an end, the Minister hoped that initial findings would be published in the late summer or early autumn 2012.

## Local Rail Meeting

On Friday 16 March 2012, Cllr Paul McLennan hosted the regular local rail meeting in the Council Chambers, East Lothian Council. Present were MSPs, Iain Gray, Jim Hume, John Lamont and Paul Wheelhouse, councillors and council staff from East Lothian and Scottish Borders Councils, SEStran and committee members of RAGES.

It was thought that the meeting with Keith Brown, MSP, Minister for Transport, at East Linton, Reston and Eyemouth had gone well. Although as yet there had been no feedback from the Minister, he had wished to see for himself the situation at these places and appeared engaged with those who met him. He could see our arguments for the local service and re-opened stations, but continued with his previous message about the subsidy that would be required. It was noted that he kept emphasising the higher end of the subsidy calculated in the MVA study.

As has already been noted, the study had been reluctant to take note of the uptake on previous projects from the calculated estimates, e.g. the Alloa to Stirling extension. Neither had it taken account of tourism in the area.

However, SEStran noted that the modelling software was not good at doing this and it would require a subjective assessment to include such a contribution.

SEStran tabled their brief for the additional work to be undertaken to enhance the MVA study published in September 2011 and reported that it had been submitted to Transport Scotland and MVA Consultancy earlier in the week for agreement and costing. It was hoped that work could start by the end of March and SEStran estimated that it should be completed by August 2012.

The brief has been divided into seven tasks:

- Review local bus/coach services and appraise options for new services - this is a requirement of STAG2
- Operational solutions - the study assumed the local services would be resourced with additional trains and crew, but cognisance should be taken of the

He also noted that a decision on “our” project was not required as a pre-requisite for the letting of the franchise as this could be added during its lifetime.

RAGES again thanked the Minister for taking the time to visit East Linton, Reston and Eyemouth and hoped for a good outcome when the additional study information was made available to him. He certainly was left in no doubt about the support he had seen and heard that afternoon.

opportunity to: use train sets which terminate at Edinburgh to run through to Dunbar or Berwick; assess changes to the Edinburgh Glasgow Improvement Programme to provide sets to do this; and to integrate the North Berwick sets (Ed: which is currently done)

- Impact on LDHS services - improved local services could be combined with reduced long distance stops
- The Socio Economic context - these issues should be expanded more than was done in the original study
- Alternative sites - the merits of a station nearer to Eyemouth should be considered. The meeting thought that this was unnecessary, but SEStran has insisted on its inclusion
- Funding sources - the impact of new stations being funded by the respective local authorities rather than central government should be assessed
- Reporting - a report should be produced which will supplement the 2011 Study.

A priority should be for the local service project to be included in the new ScotRail franchise currently under review and due to be implemented in 2014.

The consultation document, which all had contributed to, should be published in an initial form during Autumn 2012.

The next meeting would take place towards the end of June, when it was hoped that MVA Consultancy would be able to present a preview of their study and with the views from those around the table and from the Community Councils be able to adjust its outcome if necessary.

### Brief update

At the time of writing, an amended brief for the consultants was with Transport Scotland for final comments. It is expected that once the Councils have received these comments from Transport Scotland, MVA Consultancy would start work on the additional study work immediately.

## East Coast Meeting

From page 4

Having just been at the official re-opening of King’s Cross, there were some slides showing this.

East Coast will keep in touch at Dunbar, by keeping local stakeholders informed of any changes affecting the station, including local MSPs, East Lothian Council and RAGES. There will be more stakeholder trains similar to that which Barrie travelled on last April. The “Adopt a station” scheme will continue.

On behalf of RAGES, Tom thanked Karen and her staff for their time at Dunbar and the committee saw her safely away at the station.

# East Coast Managing Director meets RAGES

The long awaited meeting with East Coast's Managing Director, Karen Boswell, took place on Monday in the Royal Mackintosh Hotel, Dunbar.

Members of the committee met her arriving at Dunbar on the 15:41 hrs CrossCountry from York. She had already been to King's Cross that day for the official opening of the refurbished station. Accompanying her were: Mike Ross (her PA); Paul Emberley (Director of Communications); and Shaun Fisher (Head of Operational Planning).

RAGES had invited key people to be present at the meeting, but being in the afternoon, many had made their apologies. Present, however, were Paul Wheelhouse, MSP, Cllr Norman Hampshire and Steven Bunyan, Dunbar Community Council, as well as four of the RAGES Committee: Tom Thorburn, Barrie Forrest, Allison Cosgrove and Russell Darling.

After the introductions, Tom Thorburn, RAGES Chairman, described the history of RAGES and our achievements with respect to Dunbar. We then went into the main reason for the meeting - to discuss our concerns and aspirations with East Coast. We were able to use our new digital projector to illustrate our points.

## Staff at Dunbar and Berwick

East Coast were pleased to hear that we found the staff very friendly and helpful.

## Dunbar by-passed in December 2010

Karen explained that this had been caused by extreme weather conditions and that safety for all had been at the centre of the decision to by-pass Dunbar. Access to the junctions was particularly difficult for rail staff. However, RAGES noted that East Coast had tried to keep us up to date with the situation as it was unfolding.

RAGES received the new extreme weather plan for Dunbar from Network Rail via Iain Gray, MSP, and it will be reported when the editor has space for it.

## Lack of trains between Dunbar and Berwick

Since Eureka, there is a distinct lack of trains between the two towns. RAGES instanced a case where a teacher had to give up her job as the new train times did not allow her to commute to Berwick from Dunbar.

The ceasing of direct trains through to Glasgow was also disappointing.

## Extra services

In RAGES view, extra through services were required to stop at Dunbar to and from London. At least one in each direction would offer extra opportunities for the tourist, the elderly and parents with young children who find it difficult when there is a need to change trains at, say, York: a mid-morning London service from Dunbar and a northbound stop at Dunbar leaving Kings Cross around 10:00 were suggested. East Coast said that they would consider their options.

Karen noted that it is a fine balance between "local" activity and long distance offerings and hence a compromise, adding that nine out of ten journeys out of Dunbar were north bound. The "name of the game" was connectivity. However, Tom indicated that Alnmouth was getting a far better service since the Eureka timetable was implemented.

## Fares from Dunbar

The fares between Dunbar and Musselburgh, for Queen Margaret University, was raised as these have produced an anomaly where certain fares are more costly to Musselburgh than Edinburgh.

The need for off-peak, "special" fares and 10-journey tickets were also discussed.

## Dunbar car park

The car park is now (again) fully utilised and it can be difficult for off-peak users to gain access. The cost of £4 was also considered somewhat expensive when other East Lothian Council run station car parks did not charge.

East Coast were negotiating with Network Rail on the Dunbar car park, but Karen suggested that it would better led by the local council.

## Catering service

Allison reported that she had been unable to print off catering vouchers which were part of her ticket purchase.

Another member had reported that the trolley service was sometimes unavailable between Aberdeen and Edinburgh.

## Notice boards

The electronic planner outside Dunbar station has not been working for some time, if at all. Karen noted that these were to be removed from all station sites.

## East Coast Presentation

With time running out, as Karen had to catch the 17:51 East Coast train south, she talked speedily through her presentation.

East Coast believes that they are now getting the basics right since taking over the franchise in November 2009 with good financial performance; passenger growth of over 3%; and the new timetable launched last May which has grown the business particularly in first class.

Recent performance was marred by fatalities; cable theft; lightning strikes; points failures; and problems with the class 91 locomotives. Four fifths of all delays remain due to external factors. Although we did not suffer the severe snow of last winter, this winter had its high winds.

The May 2011 timetable changes re-Dunbar were explained by Karen. The 19:00 hrs Edinburgh service was removed which meant that Dunbar lost one service. The reasoning behind this was its arrival in London at 00:05 gave limited opportunity for onward travel on the Underground as noted on their customer feedback. The 18:51 from Dunbar, 30 minutes earlier) arrives in London at 23:26 and allows links with other TOCs and the Underground.

In the meantime, Berwick received a new early morning service at 06:00 hrs arriving in London at 10:06 or earlier if the passenger changes at Newcastle. There are also two extra northbound weekday services and one extra weekend service.

Regarding future timetables, Karen suggested that there was limited change to the overall pattern and number of services anticipated in the next five years. However, it has to respond to demand and capacity constraints and what will be the impact of ScotRail's plans for the east of Scotland?

Go to page 3